



## Weekly Activity Update

January 25 – February 2 • Issue 73

### Record Snowfall in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is experiencing record snowfall and severe weather conditions this winter. Afghanistan's harsh climate and the severity of its winter is accentuated by high altitude in much of the country, leading to a danger of exposure, wind chill, and frostbite. In the last several weeks, the snowfall has left many people stranded and has caused several major accidents. More than 400 vehicles were stranded when a snow slide blocked the road from Kabul to Jalalabad. In Kabul, temperatures at night have dropped to -18 degrees Celsius; average temperature for this time of year ranges from -8 to 2 degrees. The severe weather has impacted progress in reconstruction efforts, particularly infrastructure rehabilitation. On the positive side, the heavy snowfall will help ameliorate the effects of Afghanistan's six-year drought.



*Heavy snowfall at the Dar-ul-Aman Palace in Kabul*

### Strengthening the Government

#### Budget and Operational Reform

Budget and operational reform is a key component of the USAID Afghanistan Economic Governance (AEG) program. AEG is helping facilitate the Afghan FY 1384 Budget process and to date nearly all Afghan Ministries have presented draft submissions. AEG's Budget Project within the Ministry of Finance has focused on capacity building and will continue to enhance Afghanistan's ongoing budget process. This year has seen significant improvement, with increased standardization in budget submissions and greater compliance with budget proposal guidelines.

#### Enhancing Capacity of Afghan Media

Increasing citizen awareness of and confidence in the process of recovery, rehabilitation and democratic political development is critical in post-conflict Afghanistan. One of the ways USAID is accomplishing this is by increasing the capacity of the Afghan media. The newest media center, Novice Journalism Training Program (NJTP), is housed in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province. The NJTP provides practical journalism training to Afghan university students and links them with 300 fellow journalism colleagues and students in Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Kabul, and most recently Khost and Kandahar provinces. The NJTP continues to be successful as it expands. The NJTP now runs Kabul University Radio and will increase its air time and its coverage area. Currently, the station only airs one hour per week and can not be heard beyond the university campus. The NJTP's radio station at the University of Herat was the only Afghan media outlet that went live real-time with the speeches of President Karzai and Iran's President Khatami in Iran last week. The speeches were covered by student journalists. Upon his return, Karzai was interviewed live on the student station.



*The Balkh University radio team in their new USAID funded production facility.*



*Female journalism students at the University of Herat*

## Revitalizing Agriculture

### Enhancing Rural Agricultural Development

USAID's is enhancing food security and income for the rural population through its Rebuilding Afghanistan's Agricultural Markets Program (RAMP) project. The project's objectives are to increase agricultural output and productivity as well as boost incomes by linking producers and markets. The program supports the expansion of knowledge and technologies (new crop varieties, fertilizers, crop management and protection, equipment and machinery) through extensive field demonstrations, information dissemination, and building private sector capacity. In the last several weeks, 1,422 farmers attended crop demonstrations and 98 participated in agricultural training programs and field days.

RAMP also supports market center construction, providing Afghan farmers with a place for cleaning, sorting, cold and dry storage and packaging for their products. The facilities are strategically located to capitalize on project improvements in irrigation and road rehabilitation. They also give buyers and traders easier access to farmers and their produce. To date, 141 market centers have been constructed. Construction on a vegetable dehydration factory in Parwan province is nearly complete and the factory will contract with 1,400 Afghans to provide vegetables for the international dehydrated vegetable market. The factory is expected to employ several hundred workers.



Farmers at crop demonstration



Cold storage packed with red grapes

## Security Incidents

*Note: Hostile attacks are reported through USAID's security contractors and the Associated Press*

- **Number of Hostile Attacks:** From January 25 – February 2, there were no direct attacks and two indirect attacks on USAID related activities and/or staff. During the reporting period, one person was injured and two were killed.
- **USAID Related:** During this reporting period, there was one hostile attack on an international company assisting on road reconstruction. No casualties were reported; attack described below.
- **Latest Attack:** On January 28th, in the Khwaja Du Koh district of Jawzjan province, a group of about four armed men attacked the camp of an international company working on the road reconstruction project between the cities of Sheberghan and Andkhoy. The incident took place at Khwaja Du Koh village and the armed group retreated after an hour of fire exchange with security personnel. No casualties were reported. Consequently, the local police has reinforced its presence in the area in order to avoid further incidents.

